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ABSTRACT

The Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) is intended as a pilot, on a massive scale, of particular approaches, with a systematic need to identify TVEI effects on students, staff, resources, and curricula. TVEI has a strong tendency toward the development of pilot enclaves in terms of its administrative, curricular, teaching/learning, and resource characteristics. Some general issues and tensions arising from TVEI's pilot enclave characteristics are differential allocation of extra resources, increased inservice education, curriculum change, and management problems arising from the speed of adoption. In light of contradictory pressures, the senior management of schools have to balance the gains of TVEI in the form of increased resources against some difficult management decisions and implied changes in curriculum control. Enclave tendencies in TVEI implementation also have their expression in the shifting and ambiguous position of coordinators at both local education authority project and school points in the implementation staircase. A great irony in TVEI may be that the most daring and genuinely innovative school exponents of TVEI orthodoxy (in practice) are precisely those who have contradicted the terms under which their initial involvement with the Manpower Services Commission was negotiated, thus causing TVEI, as a pilot, to all but disappear. (YLB)

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THE 'TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INITIATIVE': ENCLAVES IN BRITISH SCHOOLS

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The 'Technical and Vocational Education Initiative': Enclaves in British Schools

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Paper for the conference 'Vocationalising Education',
University of London Institute of Education,
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Introduction

The Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) has been in operation in British schools since the September of 1983. The programme included 14 local education authorities in its first year, in subsequent years, these fourteen have been joined by 48 (1984) and then another 12 (1985).

While the analysis of the political and sociological significance of TVEI is of great interest to the author, this paper is confined to an examination of some of the unintended effects of the implementation strategy the British Government, via the Manpower Services Commission, has chosen to adopt in promoting technical and vocational education in British schools and colleges.

Figure 1, is a synthesis of the various guidelines issued to local education authorities (LEAs) for the submission of proposals for funding TVEI projects. It will be noticed that the projects should last five years with two cohorts of students completing the course in the 14-18 intended age range. In general practice, this has resulted in a group of secondary schools (14-16/18 years) and Colleges of Further Education (16-18/19 years) varying from two to fourteen, being involved in each LEA project. Cohorts of students in the 14/15 age range, in the first year of operation in the participating secondary schools would include a subgroup, ranging from approximately 10 to over 100, of students who constituted the TVEI cohort, i.e. that group to which the initiative specifically referred in terms of its effects. It should also be noted,

FIG. 1

TVEI Policy Description

SPONSORS: H.M. Government

AGENCY: Manpower Services Commission

MANAGERS/DESIGNERS: L.E.A.

USERS: Teachers/Students

PURPOSES: To explore and test methods of organising, delivering, managing, resourcing } replicable programmes of T/V education

STATED AIMS

To widen and enrich the curriculum
prepare students for the world of work
help students lead a fuller life
enable students to contribute to the life of the community
enable students to adapt to a changing occupational environment
help students to 'learn how to learn'.

AGENCY OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

LEAs should be direct line managers, designers and responsible parties of schemes.
There are centrally devised general criteria with specific design features developed locally.
Funding will be met by the agency of all extra costs incurred in educating the cohort within a scheme under strict financial accounting procedures.
Participants should be consulted during the development of project proposals.
The agency will accept a variety of approaches in order to meet 'purposes' and 'aims' above.

FEATURES OF THE 'DESIGNATED' PROGRAMME : AGENCY GUIDELINES

Target Group

A scheme should include 1000 students during its life.
Two cohorts of students should complete the course in the 14-18 age range.
Participation by students in the scheme should be voluntary.
Students should be attracted from the full ability range.
Both sexes should be equally represented.
Mixed sex classes should be the norm.
Some provision for students with special educational needs should be provided.

Curricular Features

Curricular designs should be for four years between the 14-18 age range.
Designs should state specific objectives, including affective objectives.
Designs should link to subsequent training or vocational opportunities.
Designs should include a 'work experience' component.
Designs should be responsive to local and national shifts in 'employment opportunities'.
Designs should consist of both general and technical/vocational (the provision of courses which lead to students' acquisition of generic or specific skills with a view to employment) education.

Assessment

Courses should lead to nationally recognised qualifications.
Assessment of performance should be continually and terminally negotiated, with records of achievement or 'profiles' which should express student achievements not readily deducible from formal qualifications.

Management and Staffing

Each LEA scheme should appoint a coordinator.
Each participating institution should appoint a coordinator.
Local management by a 'support arrangement', i.e. a committee of interested persons, e.g. LEA, local industry, teachers, parents, interested voluntary bodies.

and this is important, that the purpose of the TVEI is to explore and test methods of organising, delivery, managing and resourcing replicable programmes of technical and vocational education. In other words, TVEI is intended as a 'pilot', on a massive scale, of particular approaches,with a systematic need to identify TVEI effects on students, staff, resources and curricula etc. This paper builds on some existing general observations on the problems of 'piloting' as a strategy to promote change in curricular relevance and identifies some internal tensions inherent in TVEI as a specific strategy.[1]

Some of what we know about the problems of 'piloting'

There is, of course, a wider literature on the problems of 'piloting' as a strategy for change, so by highlighting some recently made observations by Michael Crossley (1984) I intend only to introduce my interest rather than 'exhaust the field'. He puts 'relevance' education in a socio economic context by referring schematically to the tendency of its introduction to create dualist systems of education ie. literary, academic schooling existing alongside 'experiential', vocational schooling. At the same time these two systems tend to be experienced by different 'classes' of students leading them into hierarchically arranged positions in the division of labour. The 'systemic' constraints on developing more 'relevant' curricula which emanate from this tendency have lead to a more 'sensitive' approach to the issue of implementation, if only to discover the limits of incremental changes when reflexively thought out. The SSCEP project (see

Saunders and Vulliamy 1983) in Papua New Guinea is a practical case in point and in the literature, the 'step wise' approach to innovation advocated by Sinclair and Lillis (1980) is another.

Crossley argues that, as a reaction against the clumsy and sociologically naive nationwide attempts at relevance innovation, stepwise, local or pilot strategies have become enthusiastically endorsed. However, he identifies four characteristics of 'piloting' which have unintended and potentially adverse effects on the capacity of pilots to generate wider applications and replicability. These characterisations are summarised below.

1. Pilots are often associated with or dependent on key individuals who provide particularly gifted or 'charismatic' leadership almost impossible to replicate.

2. Pilots which embody alternative or culturally oppositional forms of curricula, teaching and learning styles or organisation are accommodated <u>while they remain pilots or limited in scope</u>. The full weight of resistance will not therefore be experienced until replication is attempted.

3. Pilots of vocational or 'relevant' education, even when sensitively developed, have to run alongside academic curricula, particularly in the long transitional phase associated with stepwise or pilot approaches to innovation. Thus, the transformation of vocational schooling into the 'practical side' of a conventional curricula map, with all

that implies, is difficult to prevent during long periods of development.

4. Pilot projects cannot be equated with experimental trials because of the unique circumstances, commitment and resourcing associated with their often flexible and shifting evolution. This sort of intensive support and specific condition can seldom be replicated on a wider scale.

To these cogent observations, we can add the summary point made by Leithwood et al (1974) some years ago concerning the way pilots may be intended to create 'shock waves emanating in concentric rings' (reminiscant of the ubiquitous 'ripple effects' of TVEI) from the small, massively resourced initial group of innovators. What tends to happen at the same time however, is that there is less investment in unique services the further one proceeds from the source. The logical inconsistency in this approach lies in the fact that the initial adopters are likely to be in what Leithwood calls the 'high innovator' portion of the target population, subsequent adopters tend to be low innovators, less intrinsically motivated, receiving less extrinsic motivation to change (inservice, resources, time etc). He concludes by suggesting that

> strategies for change that apply diminishing forces to increasing resistance are unlikely to be successful.

To extend these observation I will draw on the experience of evaluating twelve TVEI projects in England. Crossley and Leithwood focus on some general problems associated with the attempt to extrapolate from the experience of a 'pilot' to the wider case. But, what of the effects of the pilot itself on the wider institution in which it has been embedded? To the extent that 'pilots' are sets of practices or materials, usually expressed in a policy text, which may be clearly and self consciously distinguished from established or ascendant sets of practices, they may be said to form 'pilot enclaves' which are inserted or which intervene in the established institutional context.

A characteristic of a pilot enclave, related to points one and two made by Crossley above, is that it produces 'vigorous rhetoric' (used literally to refer to a set of 'rallying' or 'mobilising' concepts and ideas) which draws participants together and, by mutual identification with the 'enclave' culture, distinguishes adherents from non-adherents. This rhetorical practice should, however, be distinguished from 'policy realisation'. Indeed, it may be that the stronger the rhetoric is, the greater the gap between rhetoric and actual practice.

While it is plausible to identify the creation of enclaves as a general outcome of a piloting strategy, the conditions under which TVEI has been implemented, as well as the specific character of its implementation has compounded the likelihood of enclave creation. The general conditions in the British system include real funding contractions, falling rolls,

a 'popular' critique of its 'effectiveness' and a bitter and unresolved struggle between government and teachers over salaries, policy priorities and terms and conditions of service. Indeed, underlying TVEI is an analysis of schools as 'failing systems' in terms of their functional relations with employment. In this situation, the special and particular attention to a group of students, teachers and curricular areas, intrinsic to 'piloting', would inevitably exaggerate the enclaves thus created.

The M.S.C. took the 'exploration and testing' element of the brief outlined above seriously, in that pilot 'discreteness' was, at least in the initial stages of implementation, an intense preoccupation of its monitoring of TVEI. Elaborate mechanisms for the separate identification of TVEI cohorts were insisted upon, as was the use of TVEI funded resources, plant use, INSET etc. The outcome of these preoccupations was to put considerable pressure on schools to separately account for what was happening to those involved with TVEI.

The pilot enclave

As I have identified TVEI implementation as having the general characteristics of a pilot enclave, and, some specific conditions which have amplified the tendency, how are they manifest?

TVEI has developed a strong administrative and management identity with its line management of central teams, regional advisers, LEA project co-ordinators and school coordinators/ liaison officers. This set of management roles may cut

through the existing arrangements of LEA adviser, officers, Headteachers and Heads of department. In curricula terms, although guidelines were relatively open, TVEI in practice has a strong and broadly identifiable curricular orientation. Most proposals contained technology courses, including information technology, computing, food and catering, business and office skill courses and electronics. Proposals also contained personal and social, residential and work experience education.

TVEI proposals contained a set of teaching and learning practices as 'characteristic' of TVEI orthodoxy (student centredness, inquiry, problem solving, group and co-operative work, less teacher direction, less literary or text based activity, experiential rather than symbolic, unspecified links between 'theory' and 'practice', new, more 'egalitarian' relations between students and teachers) which may counter conceptions of 'conventional practice'.

Finally, and most importantly, in terms of enclave effects, it is separately and lavishly funded and staffed in comparison with current real and perceived spending. Projects starting in the second round of submissions (1984), for example, had budgets of approximately £2 million each.

In summary, TVEI has a strong tendency toward the development of enclaves in terms of its administrative, curricular, teaching/learning and resource characteristics. It should be noted however that enclave development is usually unintended and, indeed, expressly opposed by many school managers. What is of interest are the effects enclave creation has

on schools in TVEI and the differing strategic responses of key participants.

Depending on the responses of staff and the management style and ethos of schools, the enclave characteristics of TVEI have been variously managed. If, for example, the implications of participating in TVEI were not anticipated by schools, the various disruptions, curriculum changes and activities generated by TVEI have 'competed' with school interests, resulting in the perception of TVEI as 'divisive'. This may have been exacerbated by more general fears about increasing government intervention and control of the secondary school curriculum. In such cases senior staff, accustomed to control over school organisation, resource allocation and curriculum, found themselves officiating over a series of decisions on which they did not have direct control but which were implied by TVEI participation. Some general issues and tensions, arising from TVEI's pilot enclave characteristics, follow from the enclave 'sites' identified above.

The differential allocation of extra resources to some curriculum areas and not to others in a period of general contraction has inevitably generated resentment amongst some non-TVEI staff. The offer of extra resources for whatever reason was a prime incentive for school participation in TVEI. In some cases the control on use of TVEI resources conflicted with internal school decisions on whole school use. The limits on the extension of TVEI-funded resource use have not been clearly demarcated by the MSC and there has been great variation between schools on 'extended' use.

Some TVEI teachers expressed the concern raised above by Leithwood and Crossley, that TVEI was, fundamentally, a 'resource'-led curriculum innovation. This perception implied several long-term problems for the 'ripple effects' TVEI was intended to create. Unless resource provision at present rates is extended, how can the gains of TVEI be generalised? It may be that this interpretation of TVEI tends to understate the changes in teaching and learning strategies which have characterised at least the 'rhetoric' of TVEI in some schools.

The distribution of resources, increased in-service education and the allocation of extra scale points to subject areas associated with TVEI (more by custom than any implied association in the policy guidelines) has inevitably created bouyancy and dynamism in such areas. These inputs are conspicuous by their absence in other areas in the curriculum, creating a 'natural' feeling of exclusion on the part of non-included teachers. As one teacher put it, in a marvellous mixed metaphor, "It was like being left out in the cold when the cookies were handed out".

Less obvious and certainly more difficult to articulate is the sense that the conventional shape of the curriculum is irreversibly changing, threatening the departmental credibility of erstwhile 'safe' areas. Arguments have been presented which focussed on the feelings of rejection and irrelevance TVEI had prompted in some subject teachers. The perceptions which resulted in these responses characterised TVEI as narrow practical/vocational education, with which they

found difficult to identify. At the same time the fear was expressed that more traditional 'literary'-based skills would be seen as redundant. In an interesting analogy, a teacher described the TVEI enclave as the 'nouveau riche' of the curricular village, offending and threatening the old status hierarchy by its brashness and tradesmanlike culture.

In real terms, the expansion of the option choices at the end of the third year, as long as conventional forms of curriculum organisation are retained, inevitably reduces the potential number of clients for each subject, particularly if option blocks contain popular, or fashionable, subjects with which more conventional areas are competing. Related to this problem was the way, in small departments, the requirement to provide for small numbers in TVEI classes had actually reduced the normal curriculum provision across the whole of the fourth year.

In some cases the demands of TVEI in-service, co-ordination and administration meetings have created management problems relating to staff cover for involved TVEI teachers. Some Head teachers observed that the organisational effects and demands of TVEI have far outstripped expected demands associated with the numbers of students engaged within it. In this sense the needs of the 'whole school' and the needs of the TVEI pilot enclave are not congruent. Added to this senior management problem has been the demands of TVEI participation (courses, meetings, etc.) on TVEI staff, which has considerably cramped already well-loaded general time-tables, e.g. exam preparation, marking, etc.

In general, the speed with which schools were asked to submit proposals and the late stage at which final budget clearance was given by the MSC has had several effects. The choice of particular items of equipment may have been different if more time for the examination of alternatives had been available. Because proposals were often in skeleton form, decisions about appropriate resources were made without a full understanding of the implications of proposed course provision. In some cases, courses were designed in the expectation of levels of resource funding which in the event did not materialise. A final effect of the speed of adoption has been the overload on school co-ordinators and school management as they have struggled to develop, as well as administer, TVEI provision. This has resulted in the initiation of courses which have not been fully written, which have not been adequately equipped, and in a large amount of administrative data gathering, particularly in the early stages, for MSC monitoring purposes. Importantly, in many cases courses have been initiated without final accreditation. This has been the case particularly for those schools which have developed a 'stronger' interpretation of TVEI (I will return to this later), involving the breakdown of traditional two-year courses into smaller modules, which in some cases includes cross-curricular combinations.

Models of School Responses

In the light of these contradictory pressures, the senior management of schools have in effect to balance the gains

of TVEI in the form of increased resources, and for some, the provision of a platform on which to innovate the curriculum against some difficult management decisions and implied changes in curriculum control.

For a minority of schools, TVEI has provided an opportunity to begin to revamp the whole curricular map of the 14 - 18 age range, involving changes in organisation, content, assessment and teaching approaches. This option we have characterised as an adaptive extension or strong interpretation of TVEI.

For the majority, TVEI has been one of a number of competing concerns, and thus its implementation is characterised by accommodation, in which TVEI curricula are adapted to fit the general shape of already existing curricular arrangements. For these projects the potential benefits of TVEI tend to be assessed and activated slowly, with innovatory elements being introduced continuously over time.

For a small proportion of schools, TVEI has afforded an injection of funds but the general implications in curriculum change, organisation, timetabling and teaching approaches have been muted, with extensions of the option choices being the principal manifestation of TVEI presence in the curriculum. Such response may be characterised by containment or a weak version of TVEI, in which its effects have been confined and absorbed by existing school practices. In actuality, a school may have traces of all three of these 'model' responses. In effect, the placement of a school, in general, in one or other of these crude categories may depend on a combination of factors:

1. The already existing shape of the curriculum, which may include TVEI-type developments.

2. The previous experience of school staff in curriculum review and discussion.

3. The strong or weak interpretation of TVEI adopted by senior school managers.

4. The extent to which both school (or their equivalent) and project co-ordinators are perceived as 'change agents' in curriculum development and, in turn, their capacity to generate within schools and across projects a 'TVEI ethos' which includes the desired characteristics.

This capacity may well depend on factors 1, 2, 3, above and the communication channels each level has been able to develop. The teachers' action during TVEI implementation has had the effect of severely limiting curriculum and organisation meetings. Important developments in these areas have been held back in some cases.

The effects of TVEI management enclaves

Enclave tendencies in TVEI implementation have their expression in the shifting and ambiguous position of co-ordinators at both LEA project and school points in the implementation staircase.

In the case of LEA project co-ordination, co-ordinators have been charged with a role as both 'administrator' and 'change agent'. These two sets of 'practices', while not mutually exclusive, do not cohabit easily. The co-ordinators' relative power to execute changes in schools and their more general role as administrators (co-ordinating information flow, equipment procurement, establishing continuity of the TVEI proposal expressed in schools across the LEA) has by no means been explicit. It has, in true TVEI fashion, been 'negotiated' with the key participants, in this case the Heads of schools, the advisory service and LEA officers. Particularly difficult for project co-ordination has been the establishment of the boundaries of their legitimate influence in project schools. These boundaries exist between the authority of the senior managers and their 'whole school' concerns on the one hand, and the interests of the TVEI pilot 'enclave' on the other (with all its rights and obligations). The boundary is essentially concerned with the appropriate degree of influence, co-operation and control over such matters as curriculum organisation, teaching strategy and assessment which has been established between the parties with varying degrees of success. Where the project co-ordinators and senior managers have broadly congruent perceptions of TVEI and its implications, possibly coinciding with 'strong' school interpretations of TVEI, then the relationship may be characterised as collaborative. The 'irksome' management tasks associated with TVEI participation - covering for meetings, data gathering, visits to the school, etc. - are seen as necessary 'evils'. On the other hand, if there is a lack

of congruence between project co-ordinators and senior school management perception of TVEI, possibly associated with a 'weak' school interpretation, then the relationship is more 'abrasive'. Issues relating to the boundaries of legitimate influence on the internal affairs of the school are more prevalent in these cases, and the incidence of minor 'skirmishes' over the management tasks identified above is higher.

A complicating factor in the development of these 'negotiations' is the ambiguous position of the project co-ordinator with respect to the LEA and the MSC. By the nature of the position, project co-ordinators are faced with continually shifting advocacy depending on the issue. On the one hand they may be outlining the interests and the preoccupations of the LEA to both schools and the MSC (staffing ration, for example), and on the other, the preoccupations of the school to the MSC and the LEA (equipment shortages, time-tabling, the need for administration time, etc); and finally, they are faced with processing and interpreting MSC guidelines and requirements to the schools and LEAs (identification of TVEI cohorts, questions of funding, etc.). The factors influencing the project co-ordinator in successfully picking his way through these conflicting pressures are complex. A clear and agreed job specification (amongst all participating interests) in which the co-ordinating role and the proposals' orientation were stated may have been a desirable yet unusual prerequisite. The previous experience and status of the project co-ordinator may well have established preconceived limits

and possibilities to the role which were difficult to transcend once in post. Variations in previous status do coincide with variations in the degrees of overt influence from project co-ordinators which schools appear to tolerate.

The briefs given to school co-ordinators or liaison officers have varied from school to school. These variations are conditioned by the previous status of the co-ordinator and the weight given to school project co-ordination in terms of administration time for TVEI management (varying from below .1 to the whole week). In some cases, aspects of TVEI, e.g. profiling, residential education, etc., have been given to members of staff, for which 'points' may or may not have been allocated.

In many cases the workload concerned with both administration and curriculum and with teaching and learning innovation has been underestimated. Some form of 'slack' in both these capacities is seen as desirable by co-ordinators to accommodate shifts in emphasis in planning and INSET.

In general, the role of the school co-ordinator has reflected the ambiguities mentioned above between the demands of the established administrative hierarchies in school and those derived from TVEI participation. In a majority of cases the function of the school co-ordinator has been confined to the organisation of administrative directives, essentially communicating requests for information of policy action. This reduced platform (in terms of status and legitimacy) on which to initiate changes in teaching/learning strategies

or curriculum development has resulted in more active control by the senior management of the school. In schools in which TVEI is 'contained' with little impact on the 'whole' curriculum (timetable, options, teaching/learning, etc.), school co-ordinators are without the necessary influence, or, perhaps, skills or brief, to act as 'change agents' with the functional emphasis on administration. Schools which are either adopting or 'accommodating' TVEI are more likely to enhance the status of school co-ordination, either by giving the role to a senior post holder or by providing the 'climate' in which the efforts of the co-ordinator are supported and given the necessary credence.

In most cases the 'change agent' aspect of the school co-ordinator's role has been difficult to achieve, if indeed the brief included such a mandate. The many evaluation studies on curriculum change suggest that changing conventional practice in schools is a difficult and protracted business. The lack of a high commitment to change on the part of some senior staff, the related issue concerning the insufficient influence of some co-ordinators and the considerable burden of TVEI administration, combine to limit school co-ordinator initiatives in internal change.

However, where the school climate is supportive, (approved by senior management) co-ordinators have developed strategies to subvert the resistance to or suspicion of TVEI amongst whole school staffs. These strategies tend to increase the workload on co-ordinators because a 'ground rule' appears to be to minimise any disruption or burden on other members of staff derived from TVEI, creating what has been termed

elsewhere the 'grafting syndrome', centring on the 'servicing' of colleagues' organisational needs. In such circumstances the 'inclusion' tendencies of TVEI orthodoxy are more apparent and, correspondingly, the 'exclusion' and thus resistance of teachers outside or at least perceiving themselves as outside the enclave, becomes more pronounced. In this Catch 22 in which 'success' hatches increased resistance, school co-ordinators have developed the following strategic responses.

In order to minimise the establishment of a TVEI enclave (i.e. the danger inherent in the more positive or oppositional TVEI style) solely associated with particular departments or individuals, and to enhance the perception of TVEI as a 'whole school' endeavour, a maximum flow of information about TVEI appears to be prerequisite. School co-ordinators who have been able to establish a regular communication channel within and across schools and informally consolidate this via chance discussions, etc. have been able to undercut exclusion and coopt their colleagues and draw them into the planning exercise.

Those schools which have chosen to spread the use of resources have greatly enhanced the devleopment of a 'whole school' approach to TVEI. This has been achieved informally by the use of the equipment for in-house training for staff, teaching materials preparation or simply 'having a go', and by students in clubs or supporting their work in other areas of the curriculum. More formally, teachers and students have used the resources during classes, and have developed teaching and learning materials themselves or in

conjunction with members of staff directly involved in TVEI teaching.

I have mentioned above the conception by some members of staff of TVEI as inappropriate, irrelevant or threatening to their curricular specialisms. Where school co-ordinators and senior staff have been able to broaden the base of TVEI ideas in the curriculum and encourage departments to participate in curriculum review and design to include teachers outside narrow definitions of 'technology' or 'vocation', the effect has been to 'activate' the whole school. Where these strategies have not been left to chance but have been initiated in part or together as an implementation strategy, the effects are marked. The principal constraint, in implementation terms, appears to be located with the relative influence of both project and school co-ordinators on internal school policy.

One of the great ironies in TVEI may be that the most daring and genuinely innovative school exponents of TVEI orthodoxy (in practice) are precisely those which have contradicted the terms underwhich their initial involvement with the MSC was negotiated. In other words, by using strategies like those outlined above, they have dismantled the enclave and have made TVEI, as a pilot, all but disappear.

Notes

1. These issues and others related to TVEI implementation are discussed in a summary report "Emerging Issues in TVEI Implementation" by M S Saunders available from

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